The Soul is the Consciousness in the life-powers. It is the light within the heart.
—*Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad*

# THEOSOPHY

VOLUME 55 DECEMBER, 1966 NUMBER 2

## "NEW IDEAS ON CLEAN PLACES"

ACCULTURATION is a term used by sociologists to describe the changes—often very painful—which affect societies in transition, during which old attitudes, beliefs and customs give way to new patterns of human relationships which have been imposed by the impact of wars, conquests, immigrations, and other influences affecting the fabric of daily life. The most dramatic instances of acculturation now going on in the world are probably in Africa, where centuries-old ways of life are being replaced by the compulsive intrusions of Western technological society, and where old ideas and feelings about man's relationship to nature are being exchanged for the shallow pragmatisms of Western civilization. A perceptive account of this acculturation of African peoples is found in the novel, *Man in a Mirror,* by Richard Llewellyn.

What may not be so easily understood or described are the similar processes which affect even the most "advanced" of the industrialized nations. There is for example what is happening to the feeling about Christmas in the West, especially in the United States. For many hundreds of years, this time has represented a kind of climactic moment of the annual cycle. Despite its limiting association with the personification of the Christian Savior, and its alienation from the old pagan idea of a Nature festival, the very power of the inner meaning of this vital nexus between the old and the new, linked with the spirit of unexpecting generosity, has continued to flood into the hearts of men at the end of the year. Of late, however, the penetration of this spirit has been weakening, due, no doubt,

to the extreme commercialization of Christmas, which brings paralysis and death to all spontaneity, and makes feeling response to the inner nature cycle increasingly difficult. For many people, these days, the attempt to *feel* the meaning of Christmas resembles looking through a barred window into an inaccessible past. There is the sense of needing to feel the holiness of the time, and of deep moral obligation to feel it, yet of being cut off from the living flow of all such natural rhythms, so that only a kind of mechanical memory of the spirit of Christmas remains.

How better express the character of this common psychical stoppage than to say, "The times are out of joint." The cultural and social institutions of such people have a natural harmony with the cyclic phases of world-life and there is intuitive instruction from the seasons of nature. But when the times in the lives of men are shaped by other, artificial forces, such wondrous correspondences begin to fail of effect. The very pores of the social organism close to natural influences and the individual no longer has the help of a life-supporting rhythm from his culture. It is then, if he is to find such harmony, he must learn to feel it almost entirely by himself. And even in the doing, when it is successful, there is no longer the same sense of community with others, except in a manner and at a level so secret, so refined in its character, that a certain loneliness can hardly be avoided.

This, we may say, is a part of the heavy toll of Kali Yuga. It is an impost exacted by the wrong kind of self-denial, a reduction of man by nature in response to the reduction of nature by man. This is a fact of the present.

Yet we are told that the ending of the first five thousand years of Kali Yuga marks a time when a profound change for the better becomes possible for human beings, even within the dark aspect of that great cycle of retribution. It is a time, it is said, when there may take place "a renaissance of spiritual inquiry and uplift to the minds of men, and when a sound basis must be given for the people of then and of the oncoming generation." Now *how* might such a renaissance get started? It will come, we may be sure, by a fresh beginning in both ideas and institutions. Heralding this new beginning, one of Mr. Sinnett's adept teachers wrote:

> Plato was right. Ideas rule the world; and as men's minds will receive new ideas, laying aside the old and effete, the world will

> advance, mighty revolutions will spring from them, creeds and even powers will crumble before their onward march, crushed by their irresistible force. It will be just as impossible to resist their influence when the time comes as to stay the progress of the tide. But all this will come gradually on, and before it comes we have a duty set before us: that of sweeping away as much as possible the dross left to us by our pious forefathers. New ideas have to be planted on clean places, for these ideas touch upon the most momentous subjects. It is not physical phenomena, but these universal ideas, that we study; and to comprehend the former, we have first to understand the latter. They touch man's true position in the universe in relation to his previous and future births, his origin and ultimate destiny; the relation of the mortal to the immortal, of the temporary to the eternal, of the finite to the infinite; ideas larger, grander, more comprehensive, recognizing the eternal reign of immutable law, unchanging and unchangeable, in regard to which there is only an ETERNAL NOW: while to uninitiated mortals time is past or future, as related to their finite existence on this material speck of dirt. This is what we study and what many have solved.

It is in this context of the renewal, in our time, of ancient teachings and ideals, that we may be drawn to think about the meaning of what our forefathers called "Christmas," and to find appropriate applications of its original spirit in our lives. One may doubt that existing customs can be "cleaned up" or repaired, in either form or spirit, to serve this purpose. Yet the cycle is a natural reality, having in its fullness a reservoir of strength and vitality for human beings. The need is to find ways of giving these resources a fresh expression by going back for our inspiration to its source. "But all this," as the Teacher says, "will come gradually on." What remains for men in community, and what is essentially a community accomplishment, is the growth in many hearts and minds of a new sense of the meaning of the times and the cycles, brought finally to birth in a language of common understanding. To contribute to this, while at the same time "sweeping away as much as possible the dross left to us by our pious forefathers," is a task to be pursued with self-reliant reflection, and with an inspiration of our own which seeks fresh touch with the inner vibrations of Great Nature.

# THE HEAVEN OF MIND

MANY years ago a little theater in the lower east side of New York City was occupied by a company of young actors. They formed a repertory group giving experimental plays, among which was a one-act performance purporting to be the experience of a man who had just entered the after-death state. He is seated in a spacious, tastefully decorated room with large windows. The first question he asks an attendant who enters, dressed in a white robe, is whether certain acquaintances are there also. Answered in the negative he is surprised; the attendant then continues by explaining that he can have anything he may desire. He asks for the power to see what those he has left behind on earth are doing, and receives a magic telescope which gratifies his curiosity for a long time. He then asks for those things belonging to wealth and culture which he failed to attain on earth. Among these he chooses to have masterpieces of art, desiring above all the Mona Lisa. The replicas he receives, it is explained, are impossible to distinguish from the originals in the minutest detail. Eventually reaching the saturation-point of satisfied desire, he becomes restless and asks to leave his present abode. This, he is told, is the one wish that cannot be granted, and in a moment of exasperation he exclaims, "I'd rather be in hell," to which the attendant serenely replies, "Where do you think you are, sir?"

It is true that gratification of desire eventually produces satiety, brother to despair. The mind, therefore, may experience a taste of hell in spite of the fact that the process of gratification has been enjoyed. But the wise will examine motivation with the resultant mental states, searching for the knowledge to be obtained therefrom, for the manner in which the fifth principle is used is the key to the strength or weakness of the perceptive powers. These powers assume the qualities of the principle through which they function, because the consciousness encompasses every aspect of the individual. It wells up within us because of the life which vibrates throughout our being in all its aspects—physical, astral, mental, or spiritual.

However, that upon which the heart is set governs and limits our use of consciousness. The artist, the scientist, the politician, each in his own way lives and thinks mainly in a personal world. Each may fraternize with and enjoy his fellow beings, but the core of his mind, the inner meditation, is keyed to a special interest. This focusing of the perceptions produces what is called in Theosophical works a life's meditation, conditioning the after-death state and determining the skandhas, the attributes of the future incarnation. The after-death state as depicted in the play was the result of a heedless life lived under the sway of the physical senses. Such a mind may function within the bounds of social morality, yet fail to aspire beyond the prevalent status symbols.

Mind remains a mystery; it cannot perceive itself. It is constantly active throughout waking hours, and dreams on in sleep. It is the instrument of soul, yet unknown as such. If the mind could be examined, its thinking processes revealed, and its energies measured, in the same way that the brain is being studied, the cause of its illusive qualities might be gradually brought to light. But no technique for such study has been developed by materialistic research. The only true guide to the nature of the mind remains wrapped up in the ancient metaphysical teachings. To understand and apply them is difficult for a person weighted down by a religion that calls for the worship of a personal God who is capable of anger or love, who takes revenge, and who becomes jealous. Such a god but parallels human nature, in spite of the miraculous power attributed to him. In contrast, the nature of higher Manas inspired by Atma-Buddhi is truly god-like. It is incapable of human failings and sin, remaining untouched by the grossness of what we call our advanced civilization. "The spiritual mind (the upper portion, or aspect of the impersonal Manas) takes no cognizance of the senses of the physical man." Our search for an understanding of the God-principle must therefore be centered in this "upper portion," remembering that the senses give the lower portion, the intellect, its peculiar characteristics—and at times its instability.

It is not correct to think of the mind (Manas) as separated from the other principles. The currents set in motion by thought penetrate and activate the whole being, and the content of a thought remains as a directive for action long after its memory may have passed into the subconscious. And, as the substance of the various planes flows through the *whole* being, that which is homogeneous

with the nature of the thought becomes part of the man. This, then, is the meaning of the phrase "man is made of thought." But in order to direct and control this process it is possible to gather the mind into itself so that it may become illuminated by the light of the spiritual soul, and thus perceive its own nature and *modus operandi.* It will then be able to discriminate between that which is of the nature of the Heavenly Man and that which has risen from the Kamic principle and the outer shell of matter. Gradually the mind will gain new power, eventually becoming strong enough to invoke that which has been called "Spiritual Fire." It is the energy of spiritual discernment acting as instructor; and as its nature is that of occult fire, it can burn away the dross of the lower nature and illuminate the way that leads to spiritual knowledge. In common usage there are other expressions making use of the fire metaphor: one may be fired by ambition, or consumed by the fire of lust. Also, the *Bhagavad-Gita* speaks of several "higher" fires, notably the "ascetic fire of knowledge," which purifies. The latter is kindled through study. In the ancient teachings there are seven of these fires in man corresponding to the seven principles, each having seven aspects—a total of forty-nine.

In the study of our subject, the "Heaven of Mind," we must understand that which renders it possible to experience this higher state during life in a body. We are concerned with the use of that energy which, if used by the selfless soul, will burn away all sin and arouse the higher mind to full activity. At first, the inner illumination is felt in the awakening of the higher perceptive powers, to the degree permitted by the devotion with which it is sought. If devotion is steady and strong, a change in the sequences of thought will occur: ideation concerning subjective knowledge will replace the objective ratiocination which concerns itself with relative truth; memory will lose its power to intrude upon the thought processes; for the mind as it gains in heavenly qualities becomes less and less attached to earthly experiences. Eventually, memory will become like a locked file to be opened only by a spiritual key when such action becomes necessary.

Our title the "Heaven of Mind" is the literal translation of the Chinese "Tien Sien, or abstract, subjective, ideal Heaven, a metaphysical term applied to the Absolute." (*Glossary.*) The expression is so suggestive in translation that it is here used in an attempt to lead the finite mind a step nearer the infinite by outlining the dy-

namics of the transcendental effort. Therefore, that which must first be striven for is a state of mental equilibrium which leads to a successful climax in the war between the lower and higher natures, welding the two into one; then the forty-nine fires will be fed by the same fuel energizing equally the seven principles. If successful in this effort, it will be possible for the ego to consciously use his individual life and greatly expanded perceptive powers for the good of all life. Should he fail to do so he will not have complied with the universal law of compassion. He may create a heritage of bliss lasting for great periods, but in another life cycle he will be drawn back to tread the path of sorrow in matter, forfeiting a conscious life in spirit.

A mystical backdrop hangs upon the stage during each incarnation of the pilgrim soul. As he performs, in tragedy or comedy, it is seen by neither the actors nor the audience, but as the play proceeds, something of its symbolism is, so to speak, fed into the dialogue and action. This mystic presence we will call for the moment the superconscious. Just as lower manas has its subconscious, the receptacle of thought and a record of experience which, unknown to the conscious mind, exerts unexpected, and at times unwanted, influence upon conscious thought, so that which has been preserved of the spiritual aspiration and knowledge during many incarnations and devachans, remains as a heritage that will not dissipate at death or be blotted out at birth. And as we tread the stage of life, the "voice" of the super-conscious is heard when the goals we aspire to deal with spiritual knowledge.

---

Man is the only creature who does not without effort know what he is. His being is always involved in a becoming, and that becoming involves a self-transformation.

—Lewis Mumford

# YOUTH FORUM

*Last month's remarks concerning the forms of a theosophical education were so general that it is difficult to see how to apply them to particular situations. How would one illustrate those comments?*

The reservation that one may have about attempting to answer such a question comes from the fact that by being too specific you risk having general principles replaced with examples. The art of a teacher is in his unique application of principles. There are no rules or instructions on how to produce that intuitive sense of appropriateness which the true teacher has. A particular genius in every man may be expressed when he gives a kind of objective reality to abstract ideals; but when others attempt to create or objectify those same *forms,* without first having assimilated or rediscovered their motivating ideals, only a mechanical version of what previously was a vital and exciting venture is possible. By such means theory and doctrine become dogma. This may partly account for the reticence of a teacher or artist in telling others how to apply principles.

The comments made last month could be variously developed. Let us take for example a group of teenagers who have numerous interests and for whom abstract ideas become significant when related to their experience. How then do you introduce philosophy to individuals who have not experienced what its abstract categories represent? As suggested last month, it does not matter where you begin. Leonard Nelson shows in his *Socratic Method and Critical Philosophy* how Socrates took pains to question locksmiths and blacksmiths and made their everyday activities the first subject of discussion with his pupils. So perhaps the arts and crafts would be one natural place to begin a philosophical education. One could get involved in some aspect of acting or contemporary theater. For example, the production of Federico Fellini's films, such as "8½" or "Juliet of the Spirits," are dramatic encounters with the "psychism" and compulsions of this age. Fellini unwinds the skein of the manipulated and confined life so skilfully that it is difficult to see his pictures without being deeply moved. He involves his audi-

ences in a reconsideration of themselves—of who they are and what they are doing with their lives. It doesn't really matter if you call these philosophical considerations or not. Any activity which encourages one to be conscious and discriminating about the decisions and values in life participates in a philosophical venture.

How might crafts such as ceramics and weaving embody abstract and transcendental meaning? Perhaps if someone were interested in ceramics, he might apply his art to an understanding of the general significance of form, color, and texture; and how these depict the striving and yearnings of man's subjective life. Could not the art of the ceramicist be similar to that of a painter? Being closer to the utility aspect of life, must it sacrifice sensitivity and perceptive depth? May it not in some sense show in familiar forms the reach of a man's being? How does a good potter represent the skill of eye and hand at work?

The issue here is really one of an appropriate context for the free expression and exercise of the mind. There are in fact no activities which are totally void of analogues to higher meaning. Even the spectacle of a toiling, unskilled laborer can bear serious questioning, as it did for William James. Speaking of a "gang" of such fellows, James wondered about the direction of their lives:

> To say nothing of wives and babies, one may have been a convert of the Salvation Army, and had a nightingale singing of expiation and forgiveness in his heart all the while he labored. Or there might have been an apostle like Tolstoi himself, or his compatriot Bondareff, in the gang, voluntarily embracing labor as their religious mission. Class-loyalty was undoubtedly an ideal with many. And who knows how much of that higher manliness of poverty was or was not present in that gang?

Is not this concealed potential the catalyst which has produced art, revolution, and reform? What else would account for the growth of labor as an economic and cultural force—even as it is now in the vineyards and orchards with California's migrant workers?

An association of people could easily participate in and study this spirit of self-discovery and re-education which is occurring everywhere in the world. Such activities, in any degree, are embraced by the purposes of theosophical education and work. They are the centers of concern for anyone searching for meaning in this life-cycle and they illustrate fundamental principles of growth and awareness which only individual experience can supply.

# THE WISDOM RELIGION

## THE MYSTERIES I

> Nothing better than those MYSTERIES, by which, from a rough and fierce life, we are polished to gentleness (humanity, kindness), and softened.
>
> —CICERO: *de Legibus,* ii, 14

AN impenetrable veil of secrecy was thrown over the occult and religious mysteries taught, after the submersion of the last remnant of the Atlantean race, some 12,000 years ago, lest they should be shared by the unworthy, and so desecrated. It is this secrecy which led the Fifth Race to the establishment, or rather the re-establishment of the religious mysteries, in which ancient truths might be taught to the coming generations under the veil of allegory and symbolism.

It has become "fashionable," especially of late, to deride the notion that there ever was, in the *mysteries* of great and civilized peoples, such as the Egyptians, Greeks, or Romans, anything but priestly imposture. Even the Rosicrucians were no better than half lunatics, half knaves. Numerous books have been written on them; and tyros, who had hardly heard the name a few years before, sallied out as profound critics and Gnostics on the subject of alchemy, the fire-philosophers, and mysticism in general. Yet a long series of the Hierophants of Egypt, Chaldea, and Arabia are known, along with the greatest philosophers and sages of Greece and the West, to have included under the designation of wisdom and divine science all knowledge, for they considered the base and origin of every art and science as *essentially* divine. Plato regarded the *mysteries* as most sacred, and Clemens Alexandrinus, who had been himself initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries, has declared "that the doctrines taught therein contained in them the end of all human knowledge." Were Plato and Clemens two knaves or two fools, we wonder, or—both?

---

NOTE.—"The Mysteries," second section of THE WISDOM RELIGION—a study which began in the November issue—will appear in five parts. The material for this issue was taken from *Isis Unveiled, The Secret Doctrine,* and *The Key to Theosophy* in the following order: *Isis* II, 167; *S.D.* II, 124; *Key,* 36-37fn.; *Isis* II, 42-44; 90-91; 97-102.

The Gnostics entertained many of the Essenean ideas; and the Essenes had their "greater" and "minor" Mysteries at least two centuries before our era. They were the *Isarim* or *Initiates,* the descendants of the Egyptian hierophants, in whose country they had been settled for several centuries before they were converted to Buddhistic monasticism by the missionaries of King Asoka, and amalgamated later with the earliest Christians; and they existed, probably, before the old Egyptian temples were desecrated and ruined in the incessant invasion of Persians, Greeks, and other conquering hordes. The hierophants had their *atonement* enacted in the Mystery of Initiation ages before the Gnostics, or even the Essenes, had appeared. It was known among hierophants as the BAPTISM OF BLOOD, and was considered not as an atonement for the "fall of man" in Eden, but simply as an expiation for the past, present, and future sins of ignorant but nevertheless polluted mankind. The hierophant had the option of either offering his pure and sinless life as a sacrifice for his race to the gods whom he hoped to rejoin, or an animal victim. The former depended entirely on their own will. At the last moment of the solemn "new birth," the initiator passed "the word" to the initiated, and immediately after that the latter had a weapon placed in his right hand, and was ordered to *strike*. This is the true origin of the Christian dogma of atonement.

* * *

There is a wide-spread *superstition* (?), especially among the Slavonians and Russians, that the *magician* or wizard cannot die before he has passed the "word" to a successor. So deeply is it rooted among the popular beliefs, that we do not imagine there is a person in Russia who has not heard of it. It is but too easy to trace the origin of this superstition to the old Mysteries which had been for ages spread all over the globe. The ancient *Variago-Rouss* had his Mysteries in the North as well as in the South of Russia; and there are many relics of the bygone faith scattered in the lands watered by the sacred Dnieper, the baptismal Jordan of all Russia. No *Znâchar* (the knowing one) or *Koldoun* (sorcerer), male or female, can die in fact before he has passed the mysterious word to some one. The popular belief is that unless he does that he will linger and suffer for weeks and months, and were he even finally to get liberated, it would be only to wander on earth, unable to quit its region unless he finds a successor even after death. How far the belief may be verified by others, we do not know, but we have seen a case which,

for its tragical and mysterious *dénoument,* deserves to be given here as an illustration of the subject in hand. An old man, of over one hundred years of age, a peasant-serf in the government of S——, having a wide reputation as a sorcerer and healer, was said to be dying for several days, and still unable to die. The report spread like lightning, and the poor old fellow was shunned by even the members of his own family, as the latter were afraid of receiving the unwelcome inheritance.

At last the public rumor in the village was that he had sent a message to a colleague less versed than himself in the art, and who, although he lived in a distant district, was nevertheless coming at the call, and would be on hand early on the following morning. There was at that time on a visit to the proprietor of the village a young physician who, belonging to the famous school of *Nihilism* of that day, laughed outrageously at the idea. The master of the house, being a very pious man, and but half inclined to make so cheap of the "superstition," smiled—as the saying goes—but with one corner of his mouth. Meanwhile the young skeptic, to gratify his curiosity, had made a visit to the dying man, had found that he could not live twenty-four hours longer, and, determined to prove the absurdity of the "superstition," had taken means to detain the coming "successor" at a neighboring village.

Early in the morning a company of four persons, comprising the physician, the master of the place, his daughter, and the writer of the present lines, went to the hut in which was to be achieved the triumph of skepticism. The dying man was expecting his liberator every moment, and his agony at the delay became extreme. We tried to persuade the physician to humor the patient, were it for humanity's sake. He only laughed. Getting hold with one hand of the old wizard's pulse, he took out his watch with the other, and remarking in French that all would be over in a few moments, remained absorbed in his professional experiment. The scene was solemn and appalling. Suddenly the door opened, and a young boy entered with the intelligence, addressed to the doctor, that the *koum* was lying dead drunk at a neighboring village, and, according to *his orders,* could not be with "grandfather" till the next day. The young doctor felt confused, and was just going to address the old man, when, as quick as lightning, the Znâchar snatched his hand from his grasp and raised himself in bed. His deep-sunken eyes flashed; his yellow-white beard and hair streaming round his livid face made

him a dreadful sight. One instant more and his long, sinewy arms were clasped round the physician's neck, as with a supernatural force he drew the doctor's head closer and closer to his own face, where he held him as in a vise, while *whispering* words inaudible to us in his ear. The skeptic struggled to free himself, but before he had time to make one effective motion the work had evidently been done; the hands relaxed their grasp, and the old sorcerer fell on his back —a corpse! A strange and ghostly smile had settled on the stony lips—a smile of fiendish triumph and satisfied revenge; but the doctor looked paler and more ghastly than the dead man himself. He stared round with an expression of terror difficult to describe, and without answering our inquiries rushed out wildly from the hut, in the direction of the woods. Messengers were sent after him, but he was nowhere to be found. About sunset a report was heard in the forest. An hour later his body was brought home, with a bullet through his head, for the skeptic had blown out his brains!

What made him commit suicide? What magic spell of sorcery had the "word" of the dying wizard left on his mind? Who can tell?

* * *

Verily the "Christs" of the pre-Christian ages were many. But they died unknown to the world, and disappeared as silently and as mysteriously from the sight of man as Moses from the top of Pisgah, the mountain of Nebo (oracular wisdom), after he had laid his hands upon Joshua, who thus became "full of the spirit of wisdom" (*i.e., initiated*).

Paul declares that: "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise *master-builder,* I have laid the foundation." (I Cor. 3:10.) This expression, master-builder, used only *once* in the whole Bible, and by Paul, may be considered as a whole revelation. In the Mysteries, the third part of the sacred rites was called *Epopteia,* or revelation, reception into the secrets. In substance it means that stage of divine clairvoyance when everything pertaining to this earth disappears, and earthly sight is paralyzed, and the soul is united free and pure with its Spirit, or God. But the real significance of the word is "overseeing," from optomai—*I see myself.* In Sanscrit the word evapto has the same meaning, as well as *to obtain.*[1]

---

[1] In its most extensive meaning, the Sanscrit word has the same literal sense as the Greek term; both imply "revelation," by no human agent, but through the "receiving of the sacred drink." In India the initiated received the "Soma," sacred drink, which helped to liberate his soul from the body; and in the Eleusinian Mysteries it was the sacred drink

The word *epopteia* is a compound one, from *Epi*—upon, and *aptomai*—to look, or an overseer, an inspector—also used for a master-builder. The title of master-mason, in Freemasonry, is derived from this, in the sense used in the Mysteries. Therefore, when Paul entitles himself a "master-builder," he is using a word pre-eminently kabalistic, theurgic, and masonic, and one which no other apostle uses. He thus declares himself an *adept,* having the right to *initiate* others.

If we search in this direction, with those sure guides, the Grecian Mysteries and the *Kabala,* before us, it will be easy to find the secret reason why Paul was so persecuted and hated by Peter, John, and James. The author of the *Revelation* was a Jewish kabalist *pur sang,* with all the hatred inherited by him from his forefathers toward the Mysteries.[2] His jealousy during the life of Jesus extended even to Peter; and it is but after the death of their common master that we see the two apostles—the former of whom wore the Mitre and the Petaloon of the Jewish Rabbis—preach so zealously the rite of circumcision. In the eyes of Peter, Paul, who had humiliated him, and whom he felt so much his superior in "Greek learning" and philosophy, must have naturally appeared as a magician, a man polluted with the *"Gnosis,"* with the "wisdom" of the Greek Mysteries—hence, perhaps, "Simon[3] the Magician."

None of our bigots has ever looked with more scorn on the *abuses* of magic than did the true initiate of old. No modern or even mediæval law could be more severe than that of the hierophant. True, he had more discrimination, charity, and justice, than the Christian clergy; for while banishing the "unconscious" sorcerer, the person troubled with a demon, from within the sacred precincts of the adyta, the priests, instead of mercilessly burning him, took care of the unfortunate "possessed one." Having hospitals expressly for that purpose in the neighborhood of temples, the ancient "medium,"

---

offered at the Epopteia. The Grecian Mysteries are wholly derived from the Brahmanical Vedic rites, and the latter from the ante-vedic religious Mysteries—primitive Buddhist philosophy.

[2] It is needless to state that *the Gospel according to John* was not written by John but by a Platonist or a Gnostic belonging to the Neoplatonic school.

[3] The fact that Peter persecuted the "Apostle to the Gentiles," under that name, does not necessarily imply that there was no Simon Magus individually distinct from Paul. It may have become a generic name of abuse. Theodoret and Chrysostom, the earliest and most prolific commentators on the Gnosticism of those days, seem actually to make of Simon a rival of Paul, and to state that between them passed frequent messages. The former, as a diligent propagandist of what Paul terms the "antitheses of the Gnosis" (1st Epistle to Timothy), must have been a sore thorn in the side of the apostle. There are sufficient proofs of the actual existence of Simon Magus.

if obsessed, was taken care of and restored to health. But with one who had, by conscious *witchcraft,* acquired powers dangerous to his fellow-creatures, the priests of old were as severe as justice herself. "Any person *accidentally* guilty of homicide, or of any crime, or convicted of *witchcraft,* was excluded from the Eleusinian Mysteries." (See Taylor's *Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries;* Porphyry and others.) And so were they from all others. This law, mentioned by all writers on the ancient initiation, speaks for itself. The claim of Augustine, that all the explanations given by the Neoplatonists were invented by themselves is absurd. For nearly every ceremony in their true and successive order is given by Plato himself, in a more or less covered way. The Mysteries are as old as the world, and one well versed in the esoteric mythologies of various nations can trace them back to the days of the ante-Vedic period in India. A condition of the strictest virtue and purity is required from the *Vatou,* or candidate, in India before he can become an initiate, whether he aims to be a simple fakir, a *Purohita* (public priest) or a Sannyâsi, a saint of the second degree of initiation, the most holy as the most revered of them all. After having conquered, in the terrible trials preliminary to admittance to the inner temple in the subterranean crypts of his pagoda, the sannyâsi passes the rest of his life in the temple, practicing the eighty-four rules and ten virtues prescribed to the Yogis.

"No one who has not practiced, during his whole life, the ten virtues which the divine Manu makes incumbent as a duty, can be initiated into the Mysteries of the council," say the Hindu books of initiation.

These virtues are: "Resignation; the act of rendering good for evil; temperance; probity; purity; chastity, repression of the physical senses; the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures; that of the *Superior* soul (spirit); worship of truth; abstinence from anger." These virtues must alone direct the life of a true Yogi. "No unworthy adept ought to defile the ranks of the holy initiates by his presence for twenty-four hours." The adept becomes guilty after having once broken any one of these vows. Surely the exercise of such virtues is inconsistent with the idea one has of *devil*-worship and lasciviousness of purpose!

And now we will try to give a clear insight into one of the chief objects of this work. What we desire to prove is, that underlying every ancient popular religion was the same ancient wisdom-

doctrine, one and identical, professed and practiced by the initiates of every country, who alone were aware of its existence and importance. To ascertain its origin, and the precise age in which it was matured, is now beyond human possibility. A single glance, however, is enough to assure one that it could not have attained the marvellous perfection in which we find it pictured to us in the relics of the various esoteric systems, except after a succession of ages. A philosophy so profound, a moral code so ennobling, and practical results so conclusive and so uniformly demonstrable is not the growth of a generation, or even a single epoch. Fact must have been piled upon fact, deduction upon deduction, science have begotten science, and myriads of the brightest human intellects have reflected upon the laws of nature, before this ancient doctrine had taken concrete shape. The proofs of this identity of fundamental doctrine in the old religions are found in the prevalence of a system of initiation; in the secret sacerdotal castes who had the guardianship of mystical words of power, and a public display of a phenomenal control over natural forces, indicating association with preterhuman beings. Every approach to the Mysteries of all these nations was guarded with the same jealous care, and in all, the penalty of death was inflicted upon initiates of any degree who divulged the secrets entrusted to them. We have seen that such was the case in the Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries, among the Chaldean Magi, and the Egyptian hierophants; while with the Hindus, from whom they were all derived, the same rule has prevailed from time immemorial. We are left in no doubt upon this point; for the *Agrushada Parikshai* says explicitly, "Every initiate, to whatever degree he may belong, who reveals the great sacred formula, must be put to death."

Naturally enough, this same extreme penalty was prescribed in all the multifarious sects and brotherhoods which at different periods have sprung from the ancient stock. We find it with the early Essenes, Gnostics, theurgic Neo-platonists, and medieval philosophers; and in our day, even the Masons perpetuate the memory of the old obligations in the penalties of throat-cutting, dismemberment, and disemboweling, with which the candidate is threatened. As the Masonic "master's word" is communicated only at "low breath," so the selfsame precaution is prescribed in the Chaldean *Book of Numbers* and the Jewish *Mercaba*. When initiated, the neophyte was led by an *ancient* to a secluded spot, and there the latter whispered *in his ear* the great secret. (Franck: *Die Kabbala.*) The

Mason swears, under the most frightful penalties, that he will not communicate the secrets of any degree "to a brother of an *inferior degree*"; and the *Agrushada Parikshai* says: "Any initiate of the third degree who reveals before the prescribed time, to the initiates of the second degree, the superior truths, must be put to death." Again, the Masonic apprentice consents to have his "tongue torn out by the roots" if he divulge anything to a profane; and in the Hindu books of initiation, the same *Agrushada Parikshai,* we find that any initiate of the first degree (the lowest) who betrays the secrets of his initiation, to members of other castes, for whom the science should be a closed book, must have "his *tongue cut out,*" and suffer other mutilations.

As we proceed, we will point out the evidences of this identity of vows, formulas, rites, and doctrines, between the ancient faiths. We will also show that not only their memory is still preserved in India, but also that the Secret Association is still alive and as active as ever. That, after reading what we have to say, it may be inferred that the chief pontiff and hierophant, the *Brahmâtma,* is still accessible to those "who know," though perhaps recognized by another name; and that the ramifications of his influence extend throughout the world. But we will now return again to the early Christian period.

As though he were not aware that there was any esoteric significance to the exoteric symbols, and that the Mysteries themselves were composed of two parts, the lesser at Agræ, and the higher ones at Eleusinia, Clemens Alexandrinus, with a rancorous bigotry that one might expect from a renegade Neo-platonist, but is astonished to find in this generally honest and learned Father, stigmatized the Mysteries as indecent and diabolical. Whatever were the rites enacted among the neophytes before they passed to a higher form of instruction; however misunderstood were the trials of *Katharsis* or purification, during which they were submitted to every kind of probation; and however much the immaterial or physical aspect might have led to calumny, it is but wicked prejudice which can compel a person to say that under this external meaning there was not a far deeper and spiritual significance.

It is positively absurd to judge the ancients from our own standpoint of propriety and virtue. And most assuredly it is not for the Church—which now stands accused by all the modern symbologists of having adopted precisely these same emblems in their coarsest aspect, and feels herself powerless to refute the accusations—to

throw the stone at those who were her models. When men like Pythagoras, Plato, and Iamblichus, renowned for their severe morality, took part in the Mysteries, and spoke of them with veneration, it ill behooves our modern critics to judge them so rashly upon their merely external aspect. Iamblichus explains the worst; and his explanation, for an unprejudiced mind, ought to be perfectly plausible. "Exhibitions of this kind," he says, "in the Mysteries were designed to free us from licentious passions, by gratifying the sight, and at the same time vanquishing all evil thought, through *the awful sanctity* with which these rites were accompanied."[4] "The wisest and best men in the Pagan world," adds Dr. Warburton, "are unanimous in this, that the Mysteries were instituted pure, and proposed the noblest ends by the worthiest means."[5]

In these celebrated rites, although persons of both sexes and all classes were allowed to take a part, and a participation in them was even obligatory, very few indeed attained the higher and final initiation. The gradation of the Mysteries is given us by Proclus in the fourth book of his *Theology of Plato*. "The perfective rite precedes in order the initiation—*Muesis*—and the initiation, *Epopteia,* or the final apocalypse (revelation)." Theon of Smyrna, in *Mathematica,* also divides the mystic rites into five parts: "the first of which is the previous purification; for *neither are the Mysteries communicated to all* who are willing to receive them; . . . there are certain persons who are prevented by the voice of the crier . . . since it is necessary that such as are not expelled from the Mysteries should first be refined by certain purifications which the reception of the sacred rites succeeds. The third part is denominated *epopteia* or reception. And the fourth, which is the end and design of the revelation, is *the binding of the head and fixing of the crowns*[6] . . . whether after this he (the initiated person) becomes . . . an hierophant or sustains some other part of the sacerdotal office. But the fifth, which is produced from all these, *is friendship and interior communion with God.*" And this was the last and most awful of all the Mysteries.

There are writers who have often wondered at the meaning of this claim to a "friendship and interior communion with God." Christian authors have denied the pretensions of the "Pagans" to

---

[4] *Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians.*

[5] "Divine Legation of Moses"; The "Eleusinian Mysteries" as quoted by Thos. Taylor.

[6] This expression must not be understood literally; for as in the initiation of certain Brotherhoods it has a secret meaning, hinted at by Pythagoras, when he describes his feelings after the initiation and tells that he was crowned by the gods in whose presence he had drunk "the waters of life"—in Hindu, *a-bi-hayat*, fount of life.

such "communion," affirming that only Christian saints were and are capable of enjoying it; materialistic skeptics have altogether scoffed at the idea of both. After long ages of religious materialism and spiritual stagnation, it has most certainly become difficult if not altogether impossible to substantiate the claims of either party. The old Greeks, who had once crowded around the Agora of Athens, with its altar to the "Unknown God," are no more; and their descendants firmly believe that they have found the "Unknown" in the Jewish Jehovah. The divine ecstasies of the early Christians have made room for visions of a more modern character, in perfect keeping with progress and civilization. The "Son of man" appearing to the rapt vision of the ancient Christian as coming from the seventh heaven, in a cloud of glory, and surrounded with angels and winged seraphim, has made room for a more prosaic and at the same time more business-like Jesus. The latter is now shown as making morning calls upon Mary and Martha in Bethany; as seating himself on "the *ottoman*" with the younger sister, a lover of "ethics," while Martha goes off to the kitchen to cook.

From the birth of the solemn and majestic conception of the unrevealed Deity of the ancient adepts to such caricatured descriptions of him who died on the Cross for his philanthropic devotion to humanity, long centuries have intervened, and their heavy tread seems to have almost entirely obliterated all sense of a spiritual religion from the hearts of his professed-followers. No wonder then, that the sentence of Proclus is no longer understood by the Christians, and is rejected as a "vagary" by the materialists, who, in their negation, are less blasphemous and atheistical than many of the reverends and members of the churches. But, although the Greek *epoptai* are no more, we have now, in our own age, a people far more ancient than the oldest Hellenes, who practice the so-called "preterhuman" gifts to the same extent as did their ancestors far earlier than the days of Troy. It is to this people that we draw the attention of the psychologist and philosopher.

# *letters • questions • comment*

*Amid all the symbols and activities which characterize the Christmas season in Western countries, perhaps the most important—and certainly the most emphasized—is the idea of giving. Yet it is in this very activity that one encounters the most frustration and doubt, for while giving should be a rewarding experience for both donor and recipient, so often it is not. If a Theosophist is to join in this prevalent custom, how can he maintain the proper "spirit," and thus benefit from it?*

Few indeed are the students who do not have access to theosophical writings, either books in their own library, at the various ULT Lodges, or in the public library. Each student, then, can acquaint himself with the teaching and see for himself what is said on this subject. The way individual students apply the principles will doubtless vary considerably, for application is subject to both the interior and exterior circumstances which make up the particular incarnation of that individual and influence the direction of his actions.

To suggest that the donor should benefit from giving seems to indicate that the action is undertaken with the idea of personal gain. This would, of course, vitiate the quality of the action making it almost a "business" transaction. Rather, the "reward" is a heightened empathy with a person one cares for, and a natural joy in giving.

The custom of exchanging Christmas gifts, once a meaningful tradition, has become to a large extent a mere convention. Those who initiated the action which later became a tradition must have done so with knowledge. But through unthinking repetition the meaning was dimmed or lost, and is only to be regained in later times by a conscious effort. Many religious and national observances illustrate this corroding effect.

Among all peoples, the exchange of gifts at certain seasons is a symbolic rite. In the European tradition two myths have become inextricably intermingled: that of Santa Claus and that of the birth of the Christ—the one symbolizing the joy of giving *things* to little children (and who among us does not long to rebecome a child at

Christmas?), the other symbolizing the joy of receiving a spiritual gift to man (for which, according to the Bible, the proper response is: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men").

Theosophists embody a different tradition. For them Christmas is not only the time of repeating the age-old rejoicing in the renewal of the Christ spirit, but also of celebrating the return of the sun—a precursor of the reawakening of the whole vast world of nature to life and activity again. To encompass all or any grouping of these ideas regarding the symbolic interchange of objects is a task which requires all the thought, devotion, and sensitivity of an individual. It is no wonder that the giver is often frustrated and confused; and, in fact, the more he cares, the greater may be his feeling of inadequacy, or rather his fear that the gift itself will fail to convey what he intends.

It is obvious that neither the attitude of seeking personal reward for the giver nor that of doubt and uncertainty will enhance the gift. But, philosophically speaking, if there is any characteristic trait which an appreciation of Karma should give an individual, it is that of acceptance of present limitations in conditions and capabilities, and a realization that they stem from his own past, that they represent all that he has "earned." With this idea in mind, we will see that to give, whatever the means, is an opportunity to *share,* not only material substance, but love, knowledge, and time—all, things that we alone can give. Enlarging on these ideas, Robert Crosbie said:

> Christmas is a time for giving and also for receiving. But there is a giving that is not of things. There is a giving of the heart itself. There is the giving of service, of love, of brotherhood, of every thought that makes for good—a giving open to all, however poor our personal possessions may be. It is the feeling and the thought in our hearts which reach people and stir *their* hearts to a better perception, a better feeling, a wider and stronger action—for all our hearts are based in the same One Life. ("The Real Christmas.")

One finds several comments in the *Bhagavad-Gita* which deal with the atttitude towards actions in general, as well as with the subject of gifts. For instance, the advice is to "let, then, the motive for action be in the action itself, and not in the event." To the actor is given the suggestion that "having subdued all his passions" he should perform "with his active faculties all the duties of life, un-

concerned as to their result." Finally, those qualities which make up a man's nature are reflected in his giving. Is the gift "given out of place and season . . . without proper attention"? Is it "given with the expectation of a return from the beneficiary or with a view to spiritual benefit flowing therefrom or with reluctance"? Is it given "at the proper time to the proper person . . . not desirous of a return"? These are questions one should ask himself, in trying to make "universal applications of the doctrine." The true motive is known to each man alone; the choice also is his.

The Saviors of Mankind have made the supreme choice. As noted by Mr. Crosbie:

> The Real Christmas can come to us in our hearts. We can realize that there has arrived once more the season we can rise with. If we make up our minds to do it, we can follow the Path of our great Predecessors—the great Saviors of the world, the great Saviors of all times. They all come from the same body, whether we call Them Buddha, Jesus, or any other name. They are all Beings of the same nature who come among us, and, as was said of Jesus, in all things become like unto us that They may impart to us something of Their great knowledge and point us to the Path They followed. Always, the object of Their coming is that we in time may become even as They are. . . . The Real Christmas means something to the Real Man, and it applies to the whole of man's nature. Let us take advantage of the resurgence of spiritual, mental, and moral force that comes with the Christmas time. (THEOSOPHY 44:57.)

# *on the lookout*

*"Sleep"*

A recently published book of this title, by Gay Luce and a clinical psychologist, Julius Segal (Coward-McCann, 1966), presents the results of laboratory research on sleep. While the researchers consider the information obtained, especially in brain chemistry, "amazing," it is apparent to them that a mere beginning has been made. Only within the past few years has it been possible for workers in various fields—psychology, physiology, neurology, biochemistry, cybernetics, astronautics, etc.—to pool their resources and findings. They found that "sleep, far from being separate from man's waking life, was an integral part of its rhythm and relevant to every aspect of it." "For the first time," they say, "we have begun to gain a glimmer of the astonishing machinery of the mind during periods when it is speaking to itself."

Nothing in the experiments, of course, has shown what sleep *is,* but only its necessity for life and sanity at the human level and the universality of sleep (or a quiescence analogous to it) in lower organisms. For us, the physiological law of periodicity begins in our cells, and "sleep is generated, in part, by these tempos within." Nor has it been determined whether the total amount of sleep necessary should be taken at one time, or whether the "absolute amount" may be distributed differently.

*Cycles of Human Sleep*

Sleep "data" are gathered by means of a large polygraph machine called the electroencephalograph (EEG) which makes the "shifts" of brain waves visible. Thus it has been found that normal sleep consists of four phases, Stage I beginning when the eyes are closed and the person prepares to go to sleep. The EEG then shows a distinctive pattern, the muscles start relaxing, the heart begins to slow down, and one "drifts," often with idle thoughts concerned with the day's events. At this time the sleeper may be easily awakened, but if so, will often insist that he was not asleep. As drowsiness in-

creases, the brain waves change into what researchers call the "Alpha" rhythm (Stage II), which is characterized by a "rapid crescendo and de-crescendo" which is "unmistakable" to the trained observer. The sleeper "is now passing through the gates of the unconscious." If awakened, his dreams will be found to have drawn on the day's events for their material.

In a matter of seconds or minutes, however, the "script" of Stage II becomes interspersed with the large, slow waves which are characteristic of Stage III. It will now take a loud noise to awaken the sleeper, who is at this time breathing deeply and evenly. The heart slows still more, temperature drops lower, and blood pressure further declines. The sleeper is about to enter Stage IV, the "Delta" phase, that of deep sleep, or the "sleep of the weary." It is in the delta stage that somnambulism occurs; and it will now take a very loud noise to awaken the sleeper, though a baby's cry or his own name spoken clearly may do so. Ordinarily, a person devotes a large part of the first half of the night in delta sleep, and if awakened will usually report that his mind was a blank.

*Egoic Awakening?*

After about 60 or 90 minutes in the deep-sleep state, a strange thing occurs: the person will *appear* to be drifting back into Stage II, the near-waking state, yet he is even closer to "oblivion" than in the delta, or deep sleep, phase. Rapid eye movements (REM) indicate that he is dreaming vividly, but the dreams are seldom remembered. If, however, the sleeper is awakened at this time, it appears that the material of these dreams has been drawn from deeper layers of consciousness than was the case in Stage II. During this phase, the sleeper seems *completely* withdrawn from the external world, and to be "experiencing" at other levels of awareness. The authors describe what is known of this state in some detail:

> Despite the storm of activity in body and mind, the dreamer may seem unusually still. . . . Even with his eyes open, the dreamer is blind to the outside world. Shine a light in his eyes and they react in an unusual way, slowly diverging, drifting out and then back together. Were it to happen in waking, the person would have double vision. Indeed, narcoleptics, people who lapse directly from waking into a REM state, frequently suffer double vision, as if walking around in a partial dream state. The brain is anomalous. By contrast with Stage IV sleep, its EEG reactions *resemble those of waking, in moments of intense con-*

*centration.* Deep within the brain the temperature rises, as in waking. [Emphasis added.]

The normal person goes through four or five complete cycles each night, with most of the delta sleep occurring early in the sleeping period and REM periods clustering toward morning and becoming progressively more like the sleep of Stage II, the precursor of waking. (Two chapters on the dream state are not considered here.)

*A Warning*

Students of Theosophy may recall H.P.B.'s statement that a drunken stupor is not sleep, and EEG records show why: alcohol, amphetamines, and barbiturates may completely prevent REM sleep. When the amphetamines are taken in combination with alcohol and barbiturates, they may also bring on a temporary psychosis, or, on occasion, cause death. Even doctors have but recently been alerted to the fact that sleep disorders which look very much alike on the surface may be caused by totally different physiologic and psychologic conditions, so that a drug does not necessarily have the same effect on one person as it has on another, nor on the same person at different times. The authors caution against indiscriminate use of these drugs:

> Somewhere on the forehead of each person there should be an invisible legend that appears each time he sees his face in the mirror: CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM WITHIN—HANDLE WITH CARE. Once drugs have begun to substitute for the usual functions of the brain, the individual may no longer possess the ability to care.

Closely allied to this specific warning is that of Drs. Franz Alexander and Sheldon Selesnick in their book *The History of Psychiatry* (Harper & Row, 1966). They warn against the modern tendency to treat all mental aberrations by drugs:

> The role of the devil now has been taken over by brain chemistry. No longer a devil but a *deus ex machina,* a disturbed brain chemistry rather than the person's own life experiences, is responsible for mental illness. Whatever the cause of faulty brain chemistry may be, the new conviction is that the disturbed mind can now be cured by drugs and that the patient himself as a person no longer needs to try to understand the sources of his troubles and master them by improved self-knowledge. Brain chemistry undoubtedly has a part in all mental processes, in all our strivings, learning, and ambitions, and also in our mental ailments. But brain chemistry cannot be isolated from man, from what is the core of his existence, his personality.

*The Ego and States of Consciousness*

One of Dr. Segal's passing remarks about sleep suggests further elaboration from theosophical teachings. He says, "Quite a few modern people seek expanded consciousness from drugs, yet . . . every night the sleeping person experiences some psychedelic limitlessness that is pursued by the drug-taker." Mr. Judge describes this boundless egoic awareness in "The Three Planes of Human Life" (THEOSOPHY 44:103):

> The third state common to all is *Sushupti*, which has been translated "dreamless sleep." The translation is inadequate, for, while it is dreamless, it is also a state in which even criminals commune through the higher nature with spiritual beings and enter into the spiritual plane. It is the great spiritual reservoir by means of which the tremendous momentum toward evil living is held in check. And because it is involuntary with them, it is constantly salutary in its effect. . . . There no disturbances come from the brain action, and the being partakes to the extent his nature permits of the "banquet of the gods."

If we add to this H.P.B.'s statement (*Trans.*, p. 71) that "*Turiya* is the highest state," we will have a theosophic context in which to consider the foregoing clinical findings on sleep. Further, recalling two of H.P.B.'s statements, (1) "sleep *is* death," and (2) "there is an analogy certainly [between sleep and death], but a very great difference between the two," there is the possibility that readers may find a review of the pamphlet *After Death States* rewarding. However, extensive correlation of the information provided in *Sleep* with theosophic teachings will naturally be of such a sort that each student will prefer to follow his own line of speculation.

*Latest on Dead Sea Scrolls*

"Why does the main message of the Scrolls still remain hidden nearly twenty years after their discovery?" "Who is afraid of what they reveal?" These are questions John Marco Allegro, of Manchester University, raises and attempts to answer in his article in *Harper's* for August—"The Untold Story of the Dead Sea Scrolls." After reviewing the events leading to the finding of the first scrolls at Wadi Qumran and the subsequent archaeological investigations at that site (see THEOSOPHY 44:474-7), Prof. Allegro tells of a costly oversight: the failure to investigate a nearby cave which the searchers must have passed many times. This omission was doubtless due to the assumption that anything stored in the cave would

long ago have rotted and become valueless, but it was an expensive mistake; for after the archaeologists had left, Bedouins investigated the cave and retrieved "tens of thousands of Scroll fragments" for which the Jordan government had to pay about $90,000.

*A Boycott on the Fragments?*

To relate and make some sense of this new store of precious "scraps," eight scholars were called together, only one of whom, Prof. Allegro, was of no religious persuasion. It was agreed that publication of the documents should be restricted to not more than one a year. But—

> Fourteen years after the discovery of the Wounded Partridge cave not a single volume dealing with this material has appeared. Were it not for our limited preliminary publications, the scholarly world would still know next to nothing about the contents of the four hundred or so documents that we have painstakingly put together from the fragments.

Recently, two American scholars, W. F. Albright and David Freedman, have complained of "a partial boycott of the Dead Sea Scrolls on the part of New Testament scholars," and earlier, Edmund Wilson in his *New Yorker* articles and book, *The Scrolls of the Dead Sea* (1955), had suggested somewhat the same idea. As Prof. Allegro puts it:

> Combining a scholar's acumen with a journalist's breadth of outlook, Wilson brought to the public notice not only the possibilities of the Scrolls for the disruption of accepted Christian dogma on the uniqueness of the Faith but some idea of the "scrollduggery" that was going on behind the scenes. He left the reader in no doubt that not all the results that might come out of the Scrolls researches were welcome to religiously committed circles, and that Christian scholars were tending to avoid working out their full implications.

Prof. Allegro, however, thinks that at that time Mr. Wilson was only "partly right"; that "sheer ignorance of how to set about tackling these Hebraic and Aramaic documents" had more to do with theologians' reluctance than had "fear of what they might portend."

*Matrix of Christianity*

Yet by now, according to Prof. Allegro, enough scholarship has been expended on the Scrolls and their relationship to Christianity to establish certain facts: the fourth Gospel was not "the latest and

least Palestinian of the New Testament tradition," as had been formerly thought; the phrases "men of goodwill" and "the poor in spirit" had appeared in the Scrolls; "the sectarian ideas behind the crowd-feeding parables and the Last Supper were laid bare with the publication of a text from the caves outlining the rite of the Messianic Banquet"; many Gospel observances and emphases were found to stem from the Essenes; and the frequent "punning" on Semitic words by the exchange of vowels in different contexts had not been sufficiently explored or understood by early translators. All this he adduces to support the following statement:

> There is far too much that does not ring true in the New Testament in the light of the new comparative material. And in this I am not including the more obvious fantasies of the miracle stories, most of which New Testament scholars have long ago consigned to the realm of mythology. There is so much in the New Testament that is authentic Essenism, and yet in many cases it has been perverted in some way, robbed of its exclusivity, its political import, and given a new direction. The Christian scholar is tempted to fall back on the assumption that the differences are due to the genius or inspiration of one man. Undoubtedly this must be partly true. Most new movements can be traced to the work of one original thinker at some stage in their history. But there is usually a long process of development preceding the decisive intervention. The New Testament is so much at pains to disguise and reformulate this sectarian prehistory that the informed observer is left with a strong sense of unreality about the whole story. It reads like history and yet it so obviously is not.

*Final Observations*

Much that is interesting and significant is of necessity omitted from this summary, but Theosophists will have no difficulty in setting Prof. Allegro's conclusions within the framework of information provided in *Isis Unveiled*. He writes:

> There are obviously many problems raised by this new appraisal of Christian traditions. Nevertheless the point to be remembered is that all future work must be based first on the literary conclusions of our comparison with the Scrolls. The New Testament records after all are our only worthwhile sources for the Christian story. If they can no longer be taken at their face value, we must determine just what is their import, how they were produced and for what purpose. All other considerations are secondary.
>
> We stand at the beginning of a long and exciting road. Not all our conclusions are going to be palatable. Not only is the

historicity of the New Testament stories being called into question but the very nature of the underlying material must give occasion for pained surprise. Enough has already been resolved for us to realize that we are dealing with an extreme form of Essenism which is not only on the fringes of Judaism but even of any strictly religious philosophy at all. We are in the world of dark magic, and in particular that kind which deals with the calling up of the spirits of the dead for the purpose of necromancy. Beneath the surface of innocuous tales of giving life to little girls and older men lie incantations and even detailed rites of flesh-cutting and ventriloquism.

Can Christian scholars deal with such distasteful material sufficiently disinterestedly to probe their innermost secrets? . . . Perhaps the question really is whether this generation has the courage to face the truth and all its consequences.

*Foregoing Charges Resisted*

Objections to Mr. Allegro's charges soon began to appear. The Los Angeles *Times* (Sept. 27) quotes Dr. William Brownlee, of Claremont Graduate School, who says: "There is nothing whatever in them [the scrolls] to weaken the Christian faith as most of us know it. . . . The only thing weakened would be a particular view of revelation that has not been held by scholars for 100 years—that Christianity sprang up without roots in its society." And Prof. James Robinson, also of Claremont, adds: "Allegro's charges are unwarranted. Those he accuses are blue chip scholars whose work has never been questioned. It is Mr. Allegro who is under question by the scholarly community." Moreover, says the *Times,* "most of the 'debunking' portion of [Edmund Wilson's book] has since been discredited."

Another rejoinder appears in the *Christian Century* (Oct. 5). Patrick W. Skehan—a member of the original team of scholars working on the scrolls—deals with Mr. Allegro's points in detail, citing a later statement by Prof. Albright:

> I have said in various places that the discovery of these scrolls is revolutionizing New Testament scholarship, but there is a world of difference between my meaning for the word revolution and the meaning attached to the word by Dupont-Sommer and Allegro. They insist that this revolutionizes our knowledge of Christ and Christian theology. I insist, with a rapidly increasing number of Catholic and Protestant scholars, that the importance lies in a different direction.

Thus, we find ourselves in somewhat the same situation as we were before reading Mr. Allegro's article—awaiting elucidation

from the scrolls themselves. It is to be expected, of course, that resistance to far-reaching re-interpretation of Christian belief should be manifest in some of Mr. Allegro's critics.

*Egyptian Gnostic Documents*

Twelve of thirteen Coptic manuscripts written on papyrus, which were found by Arabs twenty years ago in a cemetery north of Aswan and then black-marketed to the highest bidder, have finally been collected in the Coptic museum at Cairo. (Los Angeles *Times,* July 13.) According to Dr. James Robinson, of Claremont, these books were compiled by Egyptian Gnostics in the first century before or after Christ. Dr. Robinson, who gained access to much of this material, has brought back sheafs of his own for further study in the Claremont Graduate School. They seem to be based, he says, largely on the teachings of John, though John apparently never worked or preached in Egypt.

One of the documents includes a letter from Peter the apostle to Philip describing a "non-Biblical appearance of the resurrected Christ." From the account:

> It describes an appearance of Jesus Christ to the assembled apostles at the Mount of Olives. Christ appeared as a burning light and explained what the individual must do to achieve resurrection, how to avoid the wiles of the Evil One and urged the apostles to preach the good news to the ends of the earth.

"The Gnostics," says Dr. Robinson, "were the intellectual eggheads of their time." They believed that "individual salvation came through knowledge rather than faith or works, [and] favored a resurrected Christ conceived of as a bright shining light rather than a physically resurrected Being." The scriptural insistence on a physical resurrection, Dr. Robinson suggests, was perhaps deliberately designed to counter the Gnostic beliefs then current. (A forthcoming series in THEOSOPHY will provide much information about the Gnostics and their beliefs and practices.)

*"Dictionary of Life"*

"Within the last five years, scientists have uncovered the 64-word 'dictionary of life' that governs the translation from the language of genes into the language of proteins," says Irving Bengelsdorf, science editor of the Los Angeles *Times* (Aug. 9). He continues:

> It is the genes that carry an individual's heredity—his "blueprint" or "instruction book" for life. And it is the proteins that

carry out these instructions. Now we are beginning to understand the details of how the information of heredity, carried by the genes, is translated into the production of proteins, the supervisors of biological activity.

And the 64 words relating heredity to proteins make up a general "dictionary of life." The dictionary is valid for the translation from genes to proteins in man, mouse, mockingbird, marigold and microbe. The genetic code is universal for all living creatures.

It turns out that life is bilingual. There is a language of genes and a language of proteins. And the 64-word dictionary containing the genetic code bridges the gap between the two languages of genes and proteins just as a Russian-English dictionary relates Russian words to their English equivalents.

*Structure of the Genetic Code*

Genes are parts of a material known as deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA). For DNA to transmit its information of heredity to make proteins, it first must make a copy of itself called messenger-ribonucleic acid (m-RNA). And just as proteins are made up of as many as 20 different varieties of amino acids arranged in a definite sequence, m-RNA is made up of four different varieties of substances called "bases" also arranged in a definite sequence.

The genetic code is the *relationship* between these two sets of sequences, and it is this relationship that biochemical research has discovered. But the discovery of the *process* of heredity only pushes the mystery farther back—to the germ itself. How did it get *its* information and its knowledge of how to pass that information on?

*Whence the "Ancestral Germ"?*

Commenting on Weissmann's theory of heredity in a footnote on page 223 of *The Secret Doctrine* I, H.P.B. says:

> There are but two ways of explaining the mystery of heredity: either the substance of the germinal cell is endowed with the faculty of crossing the whole cycle of transformations that lead to the construction of a separate organism and then to the reproduction of identical germinal cells; or, *those germinal cells do not have their genesis at all in the body of the individual, but proceed directly from the ancestral germinal cell passed from father to son through long generations.* It is the latter hypothesis that Weissmann accepted and has worked upon; and it is to this cell that he traces the immortal portion of man. So far, so good; and when this almost correct theory is accepted, how will Biologists explain the first appearance of this everlasting cell? Unless man

> "grew" like the "immortal Topsy," and was not born at all, but fell from the clouds, how was that embryological cell born in him?

And on page 224, she adds: "Complete the physical plasm, mentioned in the last footnote, the 'Germinal Cell' of man with all its material potentialities, with the 'spiritual plasm,' so to say, of the fluid that contains the five lower principles of the six-principled Dhyan—and you have the secret, if you are spiritual enough to understand it."

*Psychical Study in Christian Churches*

Our attention has been called to an item in the *Voice* (June-July-August), a British publication, which reports the increasing membership of an organization called Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies. Founded late in 1953 by Reginald M. Lester, a journalist, and "a half dozen interested clergy," the Fellowship now has sixty-two branches in England, and others in Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and the United States. Some twenty-five Anglican bishops have joined, as well as such Free Church leaders as Dr. Leslie Weatherhead, Lord Donald Soper, and Dr. Leslie Newman. A few years ago, the scope of the membership was widened to include Quakers, Unitarians, and Christian Spiritualists.

The intention in founding the Fellowship was to "establish a common meeting ground between Religion and Science . . . and to bring into Church study a fuller knowledge of the spiritual universe and the higher levels of consciousness. . . ." Toward this end, each branch has study groups (restricted to twelve members each) in healing, telepathy, psychic phenomena, mysticism, exorcism, etc. No information is given which would be helpful in evaluating these "studies" from a theosophical point of view; and we merely note this evidence of interest taken in supersensory levels of consciousness by members of orthodox churches.